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ABSTRACT

An interdisciplinary course integrating political science, literature, and film is used at Bellarmine College in Kentucky as a vehicle for examining politics on the local, state, national and international levels. Four novels and their analogous films are used, corresponding to the respective political level--"The Last Hurrah," "All the King's Men," "Advise and Consent," and "Fail-Safe." The course is developed on the premise that students usually compartmentalize information into categories based on the different courses they take, and that theoretical politics takes on a clearer meaning and becomes more affectively experienced when it is studied concretely in the context of a political novel or film. Course instruction combines the techniques of lecture, discussion, and film viewing. Following an overview of a novel or film, specific scenes and passages are discussed and are related to politics in the real world. Classes meet once a week for two and one-half hours, so that more than one subject area may be discussed or sufficient time for movie viewing will be available. Three tests and a major paper are the evaluation instruments. (A bibliography of materials on politics in fiction and film, as well as copies of a quiz and the final exam are appended.) (NKA)

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POLITICS IN FICTION & FILM:
An Introduction & Appreciation

A Team-Taught Course

ABSTRACT

"Politics in Fiction and Film" is an interdisciplinary course which integrates political science with literature and film as a vehicle for providing an understanding of politics on four levels: (1) local (The Last Hurrah), (2) state (All the King's Men), (3) national (Advise and Consent), and (4) international (Fail-Safe). In addition to introducing students to politics, this course simultaneously communicates an increased appreciation of film and fiction as art forms. Since students tend to compartmentalize information into categories based on the different courses they take (Teacher-Learning Problem: Generalization Theory), theoretical politics takes on a clearer meaning and becomes more affectively experienced when it is studied concretely in a political novel or viewed in a political film. Methodologically, an interdisciplinary approach is used which combines the instructional techniques of lecture, discussion, and film viewing. After presenting an overview of a novel or film, professors focus upon specific passages or elements in the film or text for examination, explication, and discussion; all scenes and passages involve politics, and the politics in the world of fiction is related to the practice of politics in the real world. Three tests and a major paper are the evaluation instruments, along with IDEA student evaluations.

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POLITICS IN FICTION & FILM:
An Introduction & Appreciation

A Team-Taught Course

GOAL:

A more comprehensive understanding of the operation of the political system on the local, state, national and international levels of government through the analysis of political novels and films and an increased aesthetic appreciation of fiction as an art form as well as an understanding of the role film exercises in our culture, particularly its unique merging of public reality and private experience. This, of course, is within the context of the function of a university as understood by Newman, Kerr and Wolff [cf. John Henry Cardinal Newman, "The Idea of a University;" Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University; and Robert Paul Wolff, The Ideal of the University].

TEACHER-LEARNING PROBLEM(S):

Students often tend to compartmentalize information into categories based on the different courses that they take. By doing so, they are not able to see the application of the subject matter to other areas of study nor are they able to understand how the subject matter relates to the realities of society. To discuss politics as a process in which values are authoritatively allocated in society without linking the concept to real-life situations can leave the student perplexed and frustrated. Students need to be able to transfer the idea of politics to other material with which they are familiar in order to gain a fuller understanding of the principle of politics.

The ability to transfer generalizations or principles learned in one subject area to another has been widely researched by educational psychologists. Beginning with C. H. Judd's work in the early part of this century and continuing to more current research by scholars, such as H. J. Klausmeier, W. W. Wiersma, and C. W. Harris, studies on the transfer of learning have developed a set of principles by which educators are able to relate material learned in one subject area to another.

The framework for this course is generalization theory within the process of transfer of learning. Generalization theory states that generalizations and principles are learned from a variety of experiences and that these generalizations transfer to and guide behavior in new situations. (Klausmeier and Ripple) This course attempts to understand politics through the study of literature and film. The areas of literature and film are familiar to most college students and provide vehicles within which the concept of politics can be examined. Politics takes on a clearer meaning for many students when it can be studied through a political novel or viewed in a political film. At the same time students are also able to gain a more thorough knowledge of literature through the analysis of the political novel and are shown the application of film and its techniques in its ability to tell a political story. Information, thus, is transferred and applied from one subject area to another, giving students a broader perspective in each of the disciplines under study.

OBJECTIVES:

The student should be familiarized with and able to discuss, describe and explain the following:

Politics

1. The nature of politics as a process whereby values are authoritatively allocated in a society [cf. Easton, The Political System];
2. The rise and fall of city machines in the U.S.;
3. The concepts of populism and political culture in state governments and the role of the governor as demagogue;
4. The adversarial relationship between the President and Congress;
5. The policy of deterrence in nuclear strategy;
6. The process of politics as it has been viewed in contemporary American literature and film.

Fiction

1. The definition of "pure" political novel as "a work of prose fiction which primarily focuses upon the exercise of political power within the body politic and where political ambition, political plans, and political acts permeate and unify the novel through both plot and character" [Kemmer];
2. The applicability of this definition to The Last Hurrah; All the King's Men; Advise and Consent; and Fail-Safe in terms of theme, plot and character;
3. The Longinian approach to literary criticism as it is adapted to fiction; that is the systematic but holistic examination of a literary work from the perspective of parts which coalesce into an aesthetic whole: (a) Pervasive Themes or Concepts (Noble

Conceptions); (b) Dominant Emotions (Noble Passions); (c) Plot and Character (Arrangement or Structure); (d) Controlling Metaphors, Symbols, and Imagery (Figurative Language); (e) The Appropriateness of Language to Character (Diction) [cf. Longinus, The Art of the Sublime];

4. The difference between popular political fiction and literary political fiction.

Film

1. The development and codification of film grammar as a linguistic tool for analyzing and criticizing film;
2. A methodology to compare, contrast and schematize film based on the Aristotelian "four causes" of any natural phenomenon (material, efficient, formal and final), expressed in this case as: (a) raw material; (b) methods and techniques; (c) forms and shapes; (d) purpose and value [cf. Aristotle, Physics, II, section 3];
3. Normative modes of film analysis and criticism: i.e. semiotics, auteur theory, "genre" criticism, etc. [cf. J. Dudley Andrew, Concepts in Film Theory];
4. The hermeneutics of film, specifically as it relates to the reality of politics and the signification of politics in film.

METHODOLOGY:

In this course an interdisciplinary approach is used that combines the academic disciplines of political science, literature and film with the instructional techniques of lecture, discussion and film viewing. An interdisciplinary methodology is appropriate to the goals and objectives of this course because students are expected to integrate material from the study of politics with the areas of literature and film, and, thus, overcome a narrower discipline-oriented viewpoint.

Critical theory unifies our methodology. Obviously, the influence of Horace is pervasive: the purpose of literature (and film) is to entertain and instruct; to teach and delight. In terms of day to day classroom performance, in terms of the focus and emphasis in lectures, the influence of Matthew Arnold's "Touchstone" theory of criticism guides our approach to fiction and film, an approach which allows for Longinian analysis. In The Study of Poetry Arnold expressed the belief that some segments of a literary work significantly communicate vitality, energy, or to use Hazlitt's phrase, "gusto" ("On Gusto"), and that such passages or segments illustrate themes and images and emotions which are memorable examples of excellence as they contribute to the formation of an aesthetic whole.

After presenting an overview of a novel or film, professors focus upon specific passages or elements in the film or text for examination and explication and discussion; all scenes and passages involve politics, and the politics of the world of fiction is related to the practice of politics in the real world. When these passages are explicated and discussed in class, close attention is given to the development of themes, emotions, plots, characters, and images as they pertain to (1) the structure and operation of the body politic and (2) the exercise of power in both the "real" and "fictional" worlds of politics.

The class meets once per week in a two and one-half hour period. This time enables more than one subject area to be discussed during each class period and allows enough time on those occasions when a film is to be shown. During the first class meeting the three professors of film, literature and political science each present an introductory lecture on his/her respective area of study. Through this process students are immediately made aware of the principles of politics, the meaning of political fiction and the development of film grammar for political statement. The course then goes on to examine politics on the four levels of government interaction --- local, state, national and international --- through the political novel and film.

Students read a political novel pertaining to one of the levels of government and view a film based on the novel. Each of the three professors then presents material on that particular novel and film. Linkages are made by the political science professor to indicate how the idea of politics expressed in the opening lecture can be seen in operation in the novel and in the film version of the novel. The literature professor analyzes the work for its literary and political content while the film professor relates various principles of film criticism and technique as they pertain to the respective films being shown.

On the local level of government, the film and novel, The Last Hurrah, is used as a basis of discussion for the operation of city machines and their decline in this nation. All the King's Men as a book and film is examined on the state level to indicate political concepts such as populism and political culture along with the role of governor. The national level of the course incorporates the novel and film version of Advise and Consent in its critical analysis of the relationship between President and Congress. On the international level Fail-Safe is studied for its idea on international political behavior and nuclear deterrence policy.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

A quiz and an examination are given during the course with a comprehensive final examination given at the end of the course. The exams attempt to test students on their ability to integrate the material from the three subject areas of the course, and special attention is paid on the final examination to the students' understanding of the nature of politics as it was presented to them within the framework of the political novel and the political-statement film. Also, all students are required to write a major paper from one of the three subject areas of the course. The paper is written under the supervision of the professor from the subject area in which the student wishes to write the paper.

By the end of the course students had developed an understanding of politics through its exposition in political novels and films. The level of understanding could be determined through the essay question on page three of the final examination. Through this question students were able to explain how politics acts as a process that distributes values, in both material and immaterial forms, to members of society. The political process could be seen in the workings of the city machine in The Last Hurrah, in the populist programs of Willie Stark in All the King's Men, and in the struggle between President and Congress over a presidential appointment in Advise and Consent and in the restabilization of peaceful coexistence between the United States and the Soviet Union in Fail-Safe. The course, therefore, succeeded in taking the abstract principle of politics and giving it concrete form and meaning through its application in the novels and films.

Included in the evaluations have been and will be evaluations by students in both content (examinations and paper) and student perceptions of the course. In order to determine student perceptions, the IDEA Student-Teacher Evaluations will be used.

TECHNOLOGY:

The viewing of the films required a projector and a screen and, in one case, a video tape player. Such equipment is available on all college campuses. In this course a special room in the Audio-Visual Department of the Library was used to screen the films.

COST:

The only cost involved in implementation other than professors' time, was the cost for film rentals. This cost was absorbed, in this case, by the Audio-Visual Department of the Library. The movies used in the course could be purchased relatively inexpensively in either film or videotape format and retained in the school film library for future use. The rental fee for films would be nominal (in this case around \$200) and purchase of available videotape might be even lower.

POLITICS IN FICTION & FILM: AN INTRODUCTION & APPRECIATION

This course is a study in genre. An examination of politics as it exists in reality and practice and in fictionalized form in novels and films based on those novels. The course will proceed from the particular to the general, i.e. local politics, state politics, national politics, to international politics with an example of one novel and one film for each category. The course will also include a screening of the benchmark film, The Birth of a Nation, important as a fountainhead for the development of film grammar and for political statement in film.

INSTRUCTORS: Dr. Robert E. Daggy (Film)
Dr. Thomas J. Kemme (Fiction)
Dr. Michael G. Krukones (Politics)

TEXTS: Edwin O'Connor, The Last Hurrah
Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men
Allen Drury, Advise and Consent
Eugene Burdick & Harvey Wheeler, Fail Safe
Selected Reserve Readings

FILMS: The Birth of a Nation (1915): 168 minutes
Directed by D. W. Griffith
Screenplay by D. W. Griffith & Frank Woods,
from the novel The Clansman, by Thomas Dixon

The Last Hurrah (1958): 121 minutes
Directed by John Ford
Screenplay by Frank Nugent

All the King's Men (1949): 109 minutes
Directed by Robert Rossen
Screenplay by Robert Rossen

Advise and Consent (1962): 139 minutes
Directed by Otto Preminger
Screenplay by Wendell Mayes

Fail Safe (1964): 111 minutes
Directed by Sidney Lumet
Screenplay by Walter Bernstein

CLASS MEETINGS: One Three hour session per week, divided in the lecture sessions into three one hour [50 minutes] segments.

TESTS: There will be three "tests": a Quiz (October 7 - 10% of grade); a Test (October 28 - 20% of grade); and a Final Examination (30% of grade). Tests will be in objective-subjective form.

PAPER: One Paper (20 to 25 typewritten double-spaced pages citing at least 25 sources). DUE at class November 25. The topic may be a concentration in any one of the three areas (though some overlapping is inevitable and desirable) ---politics, fiction, film --- and will be chosen in consultation with the instructor for that area. The paper will be 40% of grade.

SCHEDULE

- I. August 26. Introduction to Politics, Fiction, Film
 Krukones: Introduction to Politics & the Political System (50 minutes)
 Kemme: Fiction & the Political Novel (50 minutes)
 Daggy: Development of Film Grammar in the Seminal Political Statement
 Film The Birth of a Nation (50 minutes)

- II. September 9. FILM - The Birth of a Nation

- III. September 16. FILM - The Last Hurrah

- IV. September 23. The Last Hurrah
 Krukones: Rise & Fall of City Machines (100 minutes)
 Kemme: A Fictional Anatomy of Machine Politics (50 minutes)

- V. September 30. The Last Hurrah
 Kemme: Skeffington as Political Hero or Villain (50 minutes)
 Daggy: The "Auteur Theory" of Film: a Method of Criticizing
 & Analyzing (100 minutes)

- VI. October 7. QUIZ
 FILM - All the King's Men

- VII. October 14. All the King's Men
 Krukones: The Role of the Governor in State Politics: Political
 Culture, Executive Leadership & Populism (100 minutes)
 Kemme: The Role of the Narrator in All the King's Men (50 minutes)

- VIII. October 21. All the King's Men
 Kemme: Willie Stark (50 minutes)
 Daggy: Novel to Screenplay: Structural Transition from Written
 Fiction to Filmic Fiction (100 minutes)

- IX. October 28. DISCUSSION & REVIEW (30 minutes)
EXAMINATION (120 minutes)

X. November 4. FILM - Advise and Consent

XI. November 11. Advise and Consent

Krukones: Congress & the President: an Adversarial Relationship
(100 minutes)

Kemme: Advise and Consent as an Anatomy of Power (50 minutes)

XII. November 18. Advise and Consent

Kemme: Political Heroes in Advise and Consent (50 minutes)

Daggy: The "Grand Hotel Formula" of Filmmaking (100 minutes)

XIII. November 25. PAPER DUE

FILM - Fail Safe

Daggy: Parallel Action as a Component of Film Grammar (30 minutes)

XIV. December 2. Fail Safe

Krukones: Nuclear War & Deterrence Theory (60 minutes)

Kemme: Fail Safe & Popular Political Fiction (60 minutes)

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

FINAL EXAMINATION: Cumulative and Comprehensive

Time: To Be Announced

POLITICS IN FICTION & FILM: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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BELLARMINE COLLEGE

English 341/Humanities 541
POLITICS IN FICTION AND FILM

QUIZ
October 7, 1985

Section I.

Identify or explain as appropriate (40 points - 5 points each).

1. The legitimacy factor in politics
2. Precinct
3. The exchange relationship in city machines
4. At-large elections
5. 2% club
6. FDR's effect on city machines
7. The weak mayor model
8. Alderman

SECTION II.

Answer as appropriate [30 points - 10 points each].

1. According to Northrop Frye fiction is "something made for its own sake," and there are four forms of fiction: anatomy, romance, confession and novel. Briefly define or explain what an anatomy is.

2. List the four most significant conflicts in the novel or anatomy.

3. Obviously, Skeffington is both loved and feared. List six examples that illustrate that Skeffington is loved.

SECTION III.

Filmmakers use images to "move" the action along, i.e. to explicate certain points without using significant screen time. Briefly tell what the following images in John Ford's The Last Hurrah suggested to you in the context of the film [30 points - 5 points each].

1. The rose under Mrs. Skeffington's portrait.
2. Norman Cass, Jr.'s yachting cap at the Plymouth Club.
3. The initials on the post near Skeffington's birthplace.
4. The perplexity on Amos Force's face when the fruit basket is delivered.
5. The band playing in the background as Skeffington walks home after his defeat.
6. The shadows on the wall as the henchmen ascend the stairs for their farewell.

BELLARMINE COLLEGE

English 341/Humanities 541
POLITICS IN FICTION & FILM

TEST
October 28, 1985

SECTION I. POLITICS

Part 1

Indicate & explain in two or three sentences the political principle that is operating in each of these passages from The Last Hurrah & All the King's Men. (5 points each)

1. "And the only way out was through politics; it was only when we gained a measure of political control that our people were able to come up for a little fresh air."

2. "Skeffington chuckled. 'Mother Cabrini,' he said. 'Italian born, & the first American saint. Let's see them get out of that. The first man, woman, child or monsignor who objects will be stoned out of town.'"

3. "Well, he had made some good out of some bad. The hospital. The Willie Stark Hospital, which was going to be there when Willie Stark was dead & gone."

4. "Then the doors of the house were opened, & the people who had been waiting outside---there were perhaps twenty of these---were let in."

5. "In the financing of his organization, Skeffington had found it useful to duplicate the great men of the past: he had installed a system of tithes."

6. "All change costs something. You have to write off the costs against the gain."

7. "No one had doubted that he intended to do just that, for his opposition to the ward bosses was well known."

8. "Skeffington took a poor view of marital infidelity. Like most of his people, he did not regard it as one of the genial sins."

9. "Then said, 'Your will is my strength.' And after a moment of silence said, 'Your need is my justice.'"

10. "He had no high opinion of the intelligence of the electorate, but experience had taught him that it quite adequately grasped the fact that all successful political activity was based on quid pro quo."

Part 2

Answer the following in an essay format. Undergraduate students may choose one (1) [50 points] & graduate students must answer both [25 points each].

Discuss those factors that caused the demise of city machines in this nation in this century & those elements that caused the defeat of Frank Skeffington. Are there any similarities between these two sets of explanatory variables? What steps could Skeffington have taken to avoid defeat?

The traditional political culture often breeds populist demagogues. How did the political culture in which Willie Stark operated cause him to become a populist demagogue? Be specific in your analysis of a traditional political culture & populism, & cite examples from the book & film to reinforce your argument.

SECTION II. FICTION

In this course we have discussed the political novel as "a work of prose fiction which primarily focuses upon the exercise of political power within the body politic & where political ambition, political plans & political acts permeate & unify the novel through both plot & character." We have also observed that in The Prince Machiavelli believes that an effective ruler (in modern jargon, a political "boss") needs to be both loved & feared, but if forced to choose between either love or fear, it is better to be feared. While keeping in mind our definition of the political novel & our discussion of Machiavelli, compose an essay on All the King's Men in which you analyze & explain the characters of Jack Burden & Willie Stark. In your essay integrate some knowledge of (1) Tiny Duffy; (2) Byram White; (3) Judge Irwin; (4) Ellis Burden; (5) Hugh Miller; (6) Anne Stanton; & (7) Adam Stanton into your analysis & explanation.

N. B. If you are an undergraduate student you need only include Jack Burden & Willie Stark & five additional characters in your essay. If you are a graduate student, please include all seven.

SECTION III. FILM

Part 1

Briefly (in a sentence or two) define the following terms. (5 points each)

1. auteur theory
2. back lighting
3. close-up shot
4. cutaway
5. dissolve
6. mise-en-scene
7. montage
8. neo-realism
9. parallel action
10. raw material

Part 2

Robert Rossen said to Robert Penn Warren of the ending of All the King's Men: "Son, when you are dealing with American movies you can forget, when you get to the end, anything like what you call irony --- then it's cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians." Develop an essay explicating what this quotation may mean in terms of the endings of The Last Hurrah and All the King's Men (and, of course, by extension, to most films).

BELLARMINE COLLEGE

English 341/Humanities 541
POLITICS IN FICTION AND FILM

FINAL EXAMINATION
December 9, 1985

The examination is divided into three sections -- Politics, Fiction, Film -- with each section calculated on the basis of 100 points.

SECTION I (Politics)

Part I. Briefly define six (6) of the following eight items. Each item is worth five points.

1. Institutional loyalty
2. MAD
3. Second strike capability
4. Congressional Liaison Office
5. Censure
6. Rationality in deterrence theory
7. P. D. 59
8. Congressional committees (functions)

Part 2. Answer either one of the following two short essay questions. The question is worth twenty points. GRADUATE STUDENTS: Answer both questions (10 points each).

Discuss at least three inherent differences between the President and Congress that create an adversarial relationship between these two branches of government. Apply these differences, or any others you may wish to discuss, to the relationship that developed between Congress and the President over the Leffingwell nomination in Advise and Consent.

Based on your reading of Advise and Consent, how does Drury characterize Congress as an institution of government? What changes have occurred in Congress since the time the novel was written that have made this institution different from what it was twenty-five years ago? .

Part 3. Long Essay. This question is worth fifty (50) points.

At the beginning of the semester politics was defined as the process by which values are allocated in society in an authoritative manner that is legitimate in the sense of fitting people's beliefs of right and wrong. Indicate how the political process was shown in two of the four books and films from this course. (Graduate students must use three of the four books and films.) In answering this question, be certain to discuss which specific characters were involved in the political process from each of those works you are discussing, which values were being allocated through politics, the procedures by which the values were allocated and whether the process conformed to the legitimacy factor of politics.

SECTION II (Fiction)

1. Compose a brief essay in which you present the definition of the political novel that was presented in this course. Apply this theoretical definition to Advise and Consent. To what extent is Advise and Consent a "pure" political novel? Include in your response a discussion of Seab Cooley and Bob Munson as supporting characters which substantiates your evaluation of Advise and Consent as either a "pure" or "impure" example of political fiction. (30 points)

2. Compose a brief essay in which you discuss the significance of Anne and Adam Stanton in All the King's Mne. Include in your response a discussion of imagery and symbolism. (20 points)

3. In a brief essay compare and contrast The Last Hurrah and Fail-Safe as examples of political fiction. In your response include some commentary upon the following characters: Gorman, Weinberg, "Ditto," Raskob, and the President. (20 points) You might combine this question with the following question and present one essay since the material is related.

4. When we evaluate the quality of Fail-Safe and the quality of The Last Hurrah from the perspectives of 1) themes or ideas, 2) passions or emotions, 3) structure, 4) characterization, and 5) vivid scenes and images, which is the better work of political fiction? Respond by composing a brief essay in which you provide a commentary on one through five which includes examples from the texts. (30 points)

SECTION III (Film)

Part 1. D[avid] W[ark] Griffith has been credited with developing a film grammar which has remained consistently viable both commercially and artistically over time. Choose five (5) of the innovations or refinements in film grammar developed by Griffith and discussed in class; define them briefly and then try to give an example from one of the films shown in this course which you think may be a later use of the development; briefly explain how its use contributed to the dramatic line of the scene or film. NOTE: Have fun with this; don't make it harder than it is. (10 points each)

Part 2. During the course of the semester we have read and discussed a number of reviews --- both of the films shown in class and of some current films. Choose one (1) film [it may be one shown in class or another film which you have recently seen] and write a review of it. You may, of course, reflect your own bias(es) in the review, but attempt to incorporate the critical method which was demonstrated in the reviews we have read (so far as we were able to discern a critical method). (50 points)